

May 17, 1920

Dr. Frankel,
Third Vice President.

In re: Survey of Public Health Work in American Cities

You and I have long realized the utter lack of trustworthy information on the kind and amount of public health work that is being carried on in American cities. With the hope of obtaining this information, not only for our own purposes in the Company, but as a contribution to the public health movement, we planned to send out a questionnaire to health officers of cities which, when collected and tabulated, would give the necessary facts. We would thus have a cross-section of health service as now practiced in the larger cities of the United States and Canada - about 250 of them with 25,000 population or over. We would also learn the more urgent needs of the health officers, their plans for future expansion and, also, what the Company could do to cooperate with them.

With your general guidance, such a questionnaire was drawn up and submitted to five leading sanitarians, including Prof. C.-E. A. Winslow of Yale, Dr. Donald B. Armstrong of Framingham, Dr. C. V. Chapin of Providence, Dr. Wade H. Frost of Johns Hopkins and the Public Health Service, and Dr. W. S. Rankin, President, American Public Health Association. There is unanimous agreement on the part of these five men that this investigation is most timely. Everyone is enthusiastic over the possibilities of the inquiry. But, there is considerable doubt expressed as to our ability to gather this information by the questionnaire method. Winslow is especially skeptical. In order to make the answers worthwhile, the questions have to be specific and, because of the wide scope of the inquiry, the questionnaire must be lengthy and involve a great deal of labor on the part of the health officers. The result would be that only a small percentage of the forms would be sent in.

There is virtual agreement among our correspondents that the best procedure would be to have the actual inquiry work done in each state by a trained person working under the auspices and with the authority of the State Board of Health. Local health officers would cooperate with a representative of the State Department where they might refuse us information. It is, therefore, suggested that the Company ask the Section on Public Health Administration of the American Public Health Association to appoint a special committee to take charge of the work for us, the funds required for the actual canvassing to be furnished by the Company. I agree with Winslow that \$5,000 would see the work through in a satisfactory manner.

I recommend that the Executive be asked to appropriate \$5,000 for this purpose.

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Statistician